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A
S E R M O N

Preached before the
RIGHT HONOURABLE

T H E

Lord Mayor,

And COURT of

A L D E R M E N

A T

St. *MARY le BOW*,

Upon the 21th. of *November*, 1675.

By *WILLIAM DURHAM*, B.D.
Rector of *St. Mildreds Breadstreet*, London.

L O N D O N,

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*Gul. Jane, Reverendo in Christo Patri
ac D^{no}. D^{no}. Henrico Episcopo
Lond. & sacris domesticis.*

*Jan. 13.
1675.*

To the Right Honourable
Sr. JOSEPH SHELDON,
Lord MAYOR of
L O N D O N,

A N D

To the Right Honourable
The Court of Aldermen,
WITH THE
S H E R I F F S.

MY LORD,



*N compliance with your Lord-
ships desire, which with me hath
the force of Command, this
Sermon was preacht, and is
now made publick in pursuance
of an Order of that Honourable
Court, to which I am obliged, and ready to
yield my most chearful obedience. I am not*

The Epistle Dedicatory.

So great a Flatterer of my self, as to think this hasty and unpolisht discourse deserves the honour You have put upon it: yet, I dare not so far distrust Your judgments, as not to think that it may be suitable and serviceable to the Times we live in.

A Generation who seem to make it their business to elude all the Methods of Divine Providence, and to baffle all those various Means, which God is pleased to use for their amendment: Who are neither melted by his Mercies, nor humbled by his Judgments. To obviate which great and growing Evils, I made choice of this Argument to treat on. The subject matter whereof is weighty and momentous; and, as it deserved an abler hand to set it off: so it challenges the most serious attention from the greatest Persons.

What it loseth by the weak management of the Argument must be put upon my account, who, to prevent the censures of others,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

thers, think meanlier of it than any man else can do. Such as it is, it humbly offers it self to Your favourable acceptance: not doubting but it shall find some countenance from them, who have brought it into publick view. I have only two requests to make, and I have done. One to God; that he would accompany it with his Blessing, that it may be in some measure effectual toward the cure of that great Evil it complains of: The other is to Your Lordship, and that Honourable Court, that Your charity would accept of my good intentions, and that Your Justice would make some proportionable allowance for the Infirmities of age, and very short warning.

In the acknowledgment of which Favours, I shall not cease to implore the Throne of Grace, that God would be pleased to continue Propitious to this great City, to the Governours and Government thereof: that all heats and animosities may be
laid

The Epistle Dedicatory.

laid aside, divisions healed, breaches made up: that all the Members of this Great Body may be as men of one mind in an house, and study and endeavour to promote the publick good, without respect to private advantages: which is the most probable means, to make and continue it a flourishing and a happy City. Which is the hearty and daily prayer of,

My Lord,

January the 17th.
167 $\frac{5}{8}$.

Your Lordships

most humble Servant,

William Durbam.

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the Right Honourable
the *Lord Mayor*, and *Court of Aldermen*, at *St. Mary
le Bow*, upon the 21st. of *November*, 1675.

P R O V. XXIX. 1.

*He that being often reprov'd hardens his
neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that
without remedy.*



Shall not keep you too long, by a
needless preface, at the door of
the Text: nor engage my self in a
fruitless enquiry after the cohe-
rence of these with the foregoing
words.

A task which some have undertaken in refe-
rence to this whole Book of *Proverbs*; but with
no better success, than if they had sought for de-
pen-

pendence between *Bede's Axioms*, or looked for connexion in a Rope of Sand.

The words are an entire Proposition, and resolve themselves into these three parts.

1. Here is a subject, or person spoken of; *One that hath been often reprov'd.*
2. A sin which he is supposed guilty of, *He hardens his neck.*
3. The punishment which is threatned for this sin; *He shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

For our more orderly proceeding, I shall first open these three things as they are here proposed; secondly, confirm the main Proposition, and then apply all in a few words.

I. *He that being often reprov'd.*] *Vir Increpationum*, a man of Reproofs; 'tis a familiar Hebraism, and is interpreted sometimes in an *Active*, sometimes in a *Passive* sense.

2 Sam 16.5,7.

Actively; Thus *Shimei* falsely calls *David* a *Man of Bloods*, one that had a bloody mind, a bloody hand, and had (like *Manasses*) shed innocent blood very much. And so some take it here in an *active* sense; A man of Reproofs is one (in this construction)

struction) who by occasion of his place and office, or by his voluntary undertaking is much and severe in reprov^{ing} others, and in the mean space hardens his own neck, and continues in the same or such like sins which he reprov^{es} in others. He that preaches another should not steal, and himself com-
 Rom. 2. 21, 22, &c.
 mits sacriledg, which is the worst of theft. He that reprov^{es} another for fornication, and himself com-
 mits that, or incest, which is the highest degree of uncleanness; as *Judah* did *Tamar*. He that is se-
 Gen. 38. 24. &c.
 vere toward others, in that wherein he indulgeth himself; This Person is a feared Hypocrite, who goes against the light of his own Conscience; he proclaims judgment against himself; when he hath preached to others, shall himself become a Cast-away. *He shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

But others generally take the words *Passively*; as, a Man of Desires, *i.e.* one greatly beloved; So
 Dan. 10. 11.
 a Man of Reproofs is one who deserves to be reprov^{ed}, and hath often been reprov^{ed} for his faults. In this sense he is called *Vir mortis*, a man of Death who deserves to die.

Now, a Man may be reprov^{ed} either *Inwardly* or *Outwardly*.

1. *Inwardly*, by the checks of Conscience, which is God's Deputy and Register within us to take notice of, record, and rebuke us for our faults. When we transgress the Law of God, a Copy whereof is written in our hearts, Conscience recoyls, flies in a Sinner's face, and reproves him for what he hath done amiss. Thus *Joseph's* Brethren were rebuked by their own Consciences, which brought to mind the ill usage of their Brother, And these *Jews* who brought to Christ the woman taken in Adultery, being convinced in their own Consciences by our Saviour's answer, withdrew themselves and their Indictment.

Gen. 42. 21.

Joh. 8. 9.

2. *Outwardly*; and that two waies, either by Word or Deed.

By Word, and that is either *Private* or *Publick*.

1. *Private reproof*, is that which is managed by one private person toward another. A duty enjoined in the Law, *Thou shalt not hate thy Neighbour in thy heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Brother, and not suffer sin to rest upon him.* And in the Gospel, *If thy Brother offend, tell him his fault between thee and him:* And again the Apostle, *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but reprove them rather.*

Lev. 19. 17.

Matt. 18. 15.

A Duty, if well managed, which would bring much glory to God, much advantage to our Brethren, and much comfort to our selves; *for he that rebuketh a man, afterward shall find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue.* Prov. 28. 23.

2. *Publick reproof* is in the ministry of the Word. The Word of God is not only for instruction, but for correction and reproof: And those to whom the management of it is committed, are such as reprove in the Gate. The Prophets of old declared their Messages from God in the Gates of the City or Temple, because there was the greatest concourse of People. Thus God did testify against *Israel* by his Prophets, and doth against us by the Publick Ministry every day. 2 Tim. 3. 16. 1 Cor. 29. 21.

2. *Outwardly, by Deed*; God's Rod is a speaking Rod, it hath a voice, and every stroke is a reproof. The Rod and Reproof go together, and both teach wisdom. His corrections are intended for our instruction and imbetterment.

The word which is here rendred Reproofs, signifies *Real* as well as *Verbal reproofs*: not only the reproofs and reprehension of the tongue, but also the chastisements and strokes of God's hand. *Vir in-*

crepationum, a Man of Reproofs is one *qui increpatur malis & molestiis à Deo missis, ut viam suam, i.e. depravatos suos mores, aut opinionem suam malam deferat* : When God throws crosses and troubles in our waies, hedgeth up our waies with thorns, brings trouble on our loyns, feeds us with the bread of affliction, and water of affliction; these are his *Real reproofs* whereby he would take us from our corrupt opinions, or licentious practices. In this sense *Balaam* was a *Man of Reproofs*, when the Dumb Ass speaking with Man's voice rebuked the madness of the Prophet, and yet he hardened himself in his evil way.

Numb. 22.

2 Pet. 2. 16.

A man of Reproofs then is he who being often rebuked, either by the checks of his own Conscience, or by the mouth of private Friends, by the Publick Minister or Magistrate; whom God chastiseth and scourgeth with Crosses for his amendment, but he repents not, amends not, but goes on still and hardens his neck; which is the second thing to be opened.

II. *Hardens his neck;*] The word here put for Neck is the hindermost and bony part of the neck, which consists *ex vertebratis ossibus, ut facilius huc & illuc*

illuc obvertatur : The Neck is not made of one continued bone, as the Leg or Arm ; but *there* are several smaller bones so joynted one upon another, as may serve for the more easie turning of it any way as occasion is offered. And from hence, Man being made with a pliable and yielding neck, those who are intractable and contumacious, who will not be turned from their evil resolutions and practices, are in Scripture usually termed *Duri cervice*, hard or stiff-necked.

Or 'tis a Metaphor taken from such Beasts, whose great strength lieth in their Necks ; as the Horse, *Hast thou given the Horse strength ? hast thou clothed his neck with Thunder ?* and the Leviathan, *in whose neck remaineth strength*, and who is so terrible that none can tame him. Job. 39. 19.
41. 22.

Hence the phrase is used in Scripture to describe a person or people that is stubborn, obstinate, unmorigerous and rebellious. *Ephraim is a Heifer unaccustomed to the yoke, that would not yield her neck to discipline.* The Sons of *Belial*, by whom God sets out the worst of Sinners, have their name from hence, that they will not submit their necks to any yoke of government, but would do only that which was good in their own eyes. Jer. 31. 18.

This

If. 48. 4.

Jer. 5. 3.

Ezek. 36. 26.
Acts 7. 51.

This is set out elsewhere in other words to the same sense; *thou art obstinate, thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow is as brass.* A brow of brass that could not blush, and an iron sinew that could not bend. Hence we read of rocky-faces, stony-hearts, and stiff-hearted.

Now a man is said to harden his neck as he is said to harden his heart, 'tis all one and the same thing: And where these two phrases are put together, one is only *exegetical* and explains the other. For the understanding whereof we must know, that

Ezek 36 26.

1. There is a *natural hardness* in the heart of every man. Every child of *Adam* is born with a stone in his heart, the taking of which away is a part of God's Covenant with man in Christ.

2. There is an *adventitious hardness*, which a man adds to that of his Nature. As he who labours hard, makes his hand every day more callous and brawny than it was before, so 'tis in this case, Custom in sin makes the Conscience more brawny and insensible of sin. Besides the Natural obligation which lies upon every man, God hath given them positive Laws to enforce their obedience to him; He hath given them some abilities to perform what

what he requires; he hath backt his Commandments both with Promises and Threatnings so far, that he may justly expect compliance with his Command. But no sooner doth the Devil solicit, but man inclines rather to what he *suggests*, than to what God *injoyns*. He sins *voluntarily* and persisteth in it *obstinately*, notwithstanding all the exhortations, promises, threatnings of God to the contrary. This is properly to harden a man's heart: A pregnant instance whereof we have in *Jeremy*, As for the word which thou hast spoken we will not do it; but we Jer. 44. 5-16, 17. will certainly do whatsoever proceeds out of our own mouth. But the most remarkable instance of this sin is in *Pharaoh*, who notwithstanding all that *Moses* Exod. chap. 8, 9, 10. could say or do in the name of the Lord, hardened his heart still, and became worse and worse.

3. There is a *Judicial hardness*. When man goes on thus *stubbornly* to harden his own heart, God comes in as a righteous Judge and hardens it *finally*: the former is *man's own sin*, the latter is his *just punishment*. When men like not to retain God in their knowledg, he justly gives them up to a hard heart and a reprobate mind, which is a spiritual judgment, and one of the severest that can be inflicted in this life.

Now

Now God may be said to harden man's heart two waies.

1. *Privatively*, by withholding that grace which is necessary to soften it. So St. *Austin* often ; God hardens the heart, *non infundendo malitiam, sed subtrahendo gratiam* ; not by infusing any evil into it, but by withholding the influences of that grace, which is necessary to make it willing and pliable. And again, *Deus dicitur excæcari, quando non illuminat, indurare quando non emollit* ; God is said to blind those whom he doth not enlighten, and to harden those whom he doth not soften.

2. *Positively* ; if we may so interpret those Scriptures wherein it is positively said, that God did harden the heart of *Pharaoh*, and others.

For the thing, it is not questionable ; but for the manner how, I dare not be too positive in determining. Sure it can be by *Accident* only ; for most certain it is, that God is the *Author* of no man's sin. It may be (perhaps) thus ; God gives him *Commands* which are holy, just and good, but these he *peremptorily violates* : he plies him with *Exhortations*, which he *despises* ; gives him gracious *Promises*, which he *neglects* and disbelieves ; de-

nounces

nounces *Threatnings*, which he flights and *contemns*; bestows many *Mercies* on him, which he *abusetb*: by all which, God being highly provoked, delivers him into the hand of Satan his Executioner, to harden him *finally* and *judicially*. When man thus hardens his own heart *sinfully*, God steps in and hardens it *judicially*, and then the Judgment threatened is at hand; which is the third thing to be opened,

III. *He shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy*;] In which I shall only point out these three things, which we shall have occasion again by and by to speak to.

1. Here is the *severity* of the punishment; 'tis not *chastisement* for our amendment, but *destruction*: *He shall be destroyed*.

2. The *celerity* and *speediness*, and unexpectedness of it; it shall be done *suddenly*.

3. The *certainty* and *unavoidableness* of it; it shall be *without remedy*. So I have done with the first thing proposed; and opened those three material things contained in the Text.

The ground being thus cleared, and the foundation laid, it will be no difficult thing to confirm the main Proposition; which was the next thing in

order to be done, namely, *He that being thus often reprov'd, thus hardens his neck, shall suddenly and certainly perish*: Destruction treads upon the heels of obstinate and incorrigible Sinners. Which Proposition, though it be clear enough by its own light, yet may receive farther evidence from other Scriptures.

There was a time when the people of *Israel* and *Judah* provoked God by serving Idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, *ye shall not do this thing.*
 2 Kings. 17. 13. *The Lord testified against them by all his Prophets and Seers, saying, Turn you from your evil waies, and keep my Commandments; but they would not hear, but hardened their necks and rejected his statutes, till the Lord was so angry that he removed them out of his sight.* Again, God reproves them for breaking his Sabbaths, and admonishes them for the future to keep them better: *but they obeyed not, but stiffned their necks, that they might not hear nor receive instruction, which provoked God to send a fire amongst them which could not be quenched.* Want we more instances of this? *Pharaoh* may stand for all. How often doth God reprove him by *Moses's* mouth? How often correct him by *Moses's* hand? How often doth he promise to submit, and as often rebels? till at last God swallowed him up in the Red Sea. So in *Noah's*, and in *Lot's* time.
 Jer. 17. 22. Nor

Nor need we wonder at God's severity towards them who harden their necks against Reproofs, when we consider the manifold and great aggravations of this sin.

1. *It is a sin against knowledge*, which makes it so much the greater. Conviction goes before reproof. Ere we can justly reprove a man for any fault, we must convince him of two things; first, that the thing we speak against is a sin; next, that he is guilty of it; if we fail in either of these, we cannot fasten a reproof. The Word of God, which is the tool we must work withal in this business, is for *instruction* and *conviction*, as well as for *exhortation* and *reproof*: But he that is convinced that his waies are bad, and yet will pursue them, goes against his own light, and is in a greater measure guilty. *He that knows his Master's will and doth it not, shall be beaten with more stripes.* Luk. 12. 47.

2. *'Tis a sin against mercy*. Reproof is an act of love; a man reproves not him whom he doth not regard: 'Tis the *greatest* act of love, and the truest expression of kindness, to tell us of our faults; hence we read, *Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thine heart by letting sin to rest upon him; but thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour.* If not to reprove be

Levit. 19. 17.

to hate, then to reprove must be an act of love and mercy. God loves whom he chastiseth, and re-proves them in this World, that they may not perish with it. There's hony in the top of his rod; mercy in all his rebukes: the greater is the sin which is committed against so rich mercy.

Prov. 19. 25.

3. 'Tis a sin against the means, which God hath appointed for our salvation. His corrections are intended for our instruction: the rod and reproof are to give wisdom; *Reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledg.*

By all which we see, that Reproof is a means intended by God to bring us to the knowledg and practice of our Duties. When the sick Patient sputters up his physick into the face of his Physician, his case is desperate; when we reject that which alone would cure us, we must needs perish.

4. 'Tis a sin made up of such ugly ingredients, that it cannot but be odious unto God.

1. The first ingredient that goes to the making up of this sin is *Pride*; than which nothing can be more odious to God or Man; which is clear from that of *Nehemiah*; *Our Fathers dealt proudly, and hardned their necks, and hearkned not to thy Commandment*: And again, *Thou didst testifie against them*

Nehem. 9. 16.

29.

to bring them to thy Law, but they dealt proudly, withdrew the shoulder, hardened their necks, and would not bear. The next is,

2. *Contempt and Scorn*, than which nothing provokes more. This sort of Sinners is like the *Leviathan*, who flights all the Artillery that is brought against him. *He esteemeth Iron as a Straw, and Brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flie, sling-stones are turned with him into stubble. Darts are accounted as stubble, and he laughs at the shaking of the Spear.* So he, who being often reprov'd, hardens his neck; God frowns, chides, strikes; he cares not, but goes on still. Job 41. 27.

3. *Obstinacy* and resolvedness in sin; as in those in *Jeremy*, *What thou commandest us we will not do, but we will do whatsoever is good in our own eyes.* Jer. 44. 17.

4. Lastly, *there's a sad train* which alwaies attends at the heels on't; when men are come to this, what will they stick at? In that place before mentioned, when they had once *hardned their necks*, it follows, *they became vain and followed after vanity; they joyned themselves with the Heathens, made molten Images, made a Grove, and worshipt the Host of heaven; they served Baal, and made their Sons and Daughters pass through the fire to Devils; and what not? Indeed,*

Prov. 12. 1.

deed, it dethrones that Reason which should have the empire of the Soul, and sets up Lust and Sensuality in its room; for as *Solomon* saies, *He that hateth reproof is brutish.*

And when the sin is so great, no wonder that the punishment is great too. *God is a God of Justice, and by him actions are weighed,* he measures out punishment proportionable to the offence.

Concerning this Judgment here threatned we had three things (as I noted) observable in the words.

Jer. 5. 6.

1. The severity of it, *He shall be destroyed;*] When we find God threatning this Sin, he speaks at another rate than in other cases. The fifth Chapter of *Jeremy* is full of such expressions; *A Lion out of the forrest shall slay them, a Wolf of the evening shall devour them, and a Leopard shall watch over their Cities, every one that goes out shall be torn in pieces:* what can be imagined more dreadful? When God had smitten *Israel* with blasting and drought, with famine, sword, and pestilence, but they returned not; then saies God, *thus and thus will I do unto thee,* as if he wanted words to express the greatness of his wrath, *thus and thus will I do, i. e. be fierce beyond all expression.*

Amos 4. 12.

God's

God's Reproofs are to humble us, and to bring us to himself by true repentance ; but if these do it not, he brings a *final* Judgment to our utter destruction. He charges us first with his *small Artillery*, but if that reduceth us not to our obedience, he falls upon us with his *main Battalia*. When intreaties , threatnings and corrections will do no good upon the Child, then the Father proceeds to disinherit him. When playsters and scarings will not heal the wound , the Chyrurgeon proceeds to amputation. When pruning and soyling will not make the Tree fruitful , then the Axe is laid unto the root of it. When reproofs are cast away, and chastisements mend us not, then destructions come to end us. When mens hearts grow hard and impenitent under judgments , they *treasure up wrath* 2 The6 19. *against the day of wrath*, and procure sudden *destruction* from the presence of the Lord ; which falls nothing short of the *conteretur* in the Text, *He shall be destroyed*.

2. Here's the *celerity* or speediness of the Judgment, *He shall be destroyed suddenly*, when 'tis least thought on, or expected. Though God be long ere he set forth to slay the *impenitent* and obdurate Sinner, yet when he comes he comes apace. He is full

Hos. 8, 1.

full of Patience, but patience abused turns to fury. He is not slack, as men count slackness : but will come upon Eagles wings ; with such speed as none can flie from, and with such strength as none can resist.

Gen. 7. 11.

He had born long with the old World, and had reproved them one hundred and twenty years by *Noah's* preaching ; every stroke in making the Ark reproved and called them to repentance ; but Patience being tired, then, *the same day* that *Noah* entered into the Ark, all the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters gusht out to the ruine of the World.

Gen. 19. 23, 29.

When neither awe of God's Majesty, nor the Counsels, Reproofs, nor Example of righteous *Lot* could work upon the *Sodomites* , then God comes suddenly with a tempest of fire and brimstone : The Sun rose gloriously upon them, but it was attended with an everlasting night.

Isai. 30. 12, 13.

This sudden and unexpected wrath is set out by the breach of a Wall that is ready to fall , which copes and catches a man ere he be aware , and crushes him to pieces.

Jer. 23. 19.

Sometimes 'tis resembled to a Whirlwind, which comes on a sudden and carries all before it. Hence that

that of *Solomon*, *He that is perverse in his waies shall* Prov. 28. 18.
fall at once, i. e. *certò cadet*, he shall *certainly* fall;
subitò cadet, he shall fall *suddenly*, in an hour when
 he least expects it; and, *undiquàque cadet*, he shall
utterly fall in all his concernments, and be utterly
 destroyed.

3. Here is the certainty and unavoidableness of
 the Judgment, *there shall be no remedy*. He shall be
 destroyed, and all remedies shall come too late.

God hath said it, *who is truth, and cannot lie*; who
never yet broke his word, either in promise, or threatning.
 There is a time, when diseases and wounds may be cured;
 which, if let run too long, no plaisters or medicines can
 do them good. There is a time, when God will be found of us,
 be ready to receive and save us: but if we stand out beyond
 our day, Repentance will be hid from his eyes. There was a
 time when *Esau* sought Heb. 12. 17. his Birth-right with
tears, but could not find it. Thus dealt God with such as
 despised his Prophets, and their Reproofs, the wrath of God
 came 2 Chro. 26. 16. upon them till there was no *remedy*. Calamity
 shall come *suddenly* upon the froward (saith *Solo-*
mon) Prov. 6. 15. suddenly shall they be broken, and that
without remedy. D There's

There's nothing can shore up those, whose *incorrigibleness* provokes God to come forth for their destruction. No *Policy* of man can *decline* him, no *power* can *resist* him. There's no *Remedy* of *power* or *force* against him. *Will ye provoke the Lord to jealousy? are ye stronger than he? No weapon that's formed against him shall prosper. He takes away and none can hinder him: Who can say unto him, what dost thou?*

Job 9.12.

There is no *Remedy* to *appease* him, for he forbids prayer in such a case for them. *Pray not for this People* (saith God to *Jeremy*) *nor lift up a Prayer for them, nor make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee.* Nay, though *Moses* and *Samuel* stood before me, who were so prevalent in prayer, yet my mind could not be toward this *People*; *cast them out of my sight, and let them go.* And what can be expected, when God will be no more intreated, but utter ruine and destruction?

Jer. 7.16.

Jer. 15.1.

Thus far have I gone in opening the Doctrinal part of the Text, and shewed you the miserable condition of an immorigerous, obstinate, incorrigible Sinner.

There's nothing now remains, but to make some
short

short reflexions upon what hath been said by way of Application, and I have done. And this I shall briefly dispatch by proposing these four *Queries*, to which (I beseech you) let your Consciences make an impartial answer.

1. Whether we of this place and generation be not Men of *Reproofs* ? Whether have not we been often reprov'd for our sins ?

2. Whether we have been amended by those *Reproofs* ? or, whether we have hardned our necks against them ?

3. If the latter of these appear ; whether we have not just cause to expect the judgment threatened in the Text ?

4. What way is yet left to escape so great destruction ?

1. Whether we of this place and Age have not been Men of *Reproofs* ? For the reproofs and checks of Conscience, and the *private personal rebukes* of Friends, every man can *best* and *only* judge for himself, what he hath had.

But as for those which have been more *Publick*, whether *verbal* or *real*, the thing is so evident that 'tis past denial, we have had our *reproofs*.

1. For *verbal Reproofs*; Reproof (as you have heard) is one main end and use for which the Holy Scripture was given by God. And there is no Nation under heaven, where the Word of God hath been more *purely, powerfully, constantly* preached, than in this Nation, this City.

We have been (as *Goshen*) a place of Light, when almost all the World hath sate in darkness.

It's now one hundred and fifty years since the light of the glorious Gospel hath shone out amongst us more clearly than in most other places, and *great hath been the company of Preachers*. Men not of Ordinary rank, but so many *Apollō's, mighty in the Scripture*. Who have performed the Office of faithful Watchmen, to tell you of your sins, and warn you of your danger. Men, who, according to the *abundant Grace of God given to them, have laid Judgment to the line, and Righteousness to the plummet*. Who have neither sew'd pillows under your arms, nor daub'd with untempered Morter. I need not name them to you, nor the *series* of time wherein they lived; you remember some, you have heard of the rest.

So that if this place be destroyed, 'tis not for the
the

the want of *knowledge*; I am sure, not for the want of the *means* of knowledge. They have rather surfeited and waxed wanton, than suffered a *famine of the Word of Grace*, or of any thing needful to salvation.

2. And for *Real reproofs*, whereby God hath testified against us his displeasure for our sins, that he might bring us to repentance, we have not been altogether without them neither.

I shall instance only in two, which may be yet fresh in our memories: such as our Predecessors never felt, and may those who shall come after us never feel the like! I mean the last consuming Plague, and the late dreadful Fire. And, because too many amongst us live, as if they had never seen, or not observed, these dreadful Judgments; afford me your patience, while I give you a short representation of both; that so upon serious thoughts, you may *learn Righteousness by the things which you have suffered*. Of the Plague first.

When *Death* mounted upon his pale Horse, rode in triumph through your streets, and spared neither *age, sex, nor condition*. When the high-waies to this Great City, were (as in the daies of *Shamgar*)

Judg. 5. 6.

gar) unoccupied, and none (that could well avoid it) cared to come within the sight or scent of it. When the widest streets were but thinly peopled; and many, of those few you met, carried death in their faces. When a man's breath was abhorred by his nearest Relations, and those of his most intimate Acquaintance hid themselves from him. When the Air it self became infectious, and that, without which we could not live, conveyed death into our bosoms. When the sorrows of the dying Husband were increased by the groans of his departing Wife, and both aggravated by the cries of their languishing Children. When the hungry Infant crawl'd to the sick Mothers breast, and suckt poison instead of nourishment. When your ears were fill'd, *all the day*, with the noise of *passing-Bells*, and *all night* with the doleful tone of those who call'd for them to burial. When the sad Parents were put to the ungrateful task of being the winders, bearers, buriers of their own Children. When the innocent sheep were committed to the ravenous wolf; sick people to the keeping of cruel, rapacious, and unsatiable Nurses, who were often ('tis to be feared) more cruel to them than their diseases; and murdered those, whom

whom their diseases might have spared. When *Death* fished with his largest Net, that had the smallest meshes, and spared not the *minues*, the Infants of a span long. When every day added such a number to the dead, as swell'd the weekly Bills beyond all Presidents. In a word, When the Plague was worse, in some sense, than that of *Egypt*; *There* was not a house wherein there was not *one dead*, but *here* was *many a house* in which there was not *one left alive*. Amos 6. 10.

Descend we to the next year; wherein God uses a new method, and *severer* demonstration of his wrath. He had *formerly* sent a *fire* into our *blood*, and *now* sends a *fire* into our *houses*: *that year* took away the *Inhabitants* from their *houses*; *this* takes away the *Habitations* from the *Inhabitants*. One year he throws an *hundred thousand* carcases under ground, and the next levels *thirteen thousand* houses with it. He hath dealt with us, as he threatned to do unto *Jerusalem*; and made *this City*, as he threatned *that*, Jer. 19. 11, 12.
a very *Tophet*. *Tophet* was a place of *burial*, and a Isa. 3. 33.
place of *burning*; so was this City; one year you buried till there was no place to bury in: In the next it burnt till there was little left to be consumed.

A *fire* like that of Hell, the horror whereof no

pen can express, nor tongue can tell. Worse than that at *Tabera*; that was but in the skirts of the Camp, but *this* in the bowels of this Royal City.

Numb. 11. 1, 2.

When God had permitted a vile Miscreant to throw but a flunk of fire, and his *vindictive Justice* blows the bellows, how soon is it kindled into a flame? how soon got upon the house tops? what a doleful noise awakes men from their sleepy beds, and calls them up to quench the growing flames? They in the mean time, like men amazed, cannot find their hands, but are even at their wits end, and know not which way to turn themselves. In the mean space the greedy flames pursue their prey; and while men make *none*, or *feeble* resistance, gather strength; and, because it is not suddenly quenched, grows unquenchable. Who can express the horror of that day, when this *Royal City*, the *Metropolis of the Nation*, the *Chamber of our Kings*, so renowned through the whole *V*World, was become a *Tophet*, one Oven? *V*When the proud flames had advanced their curled locks above the tops of the stateliest buildings, insulting over all engines, and contemning all force, that was used against them. *V*When the fire, like the Smith's forge, grew the hotter

hotter for the water that was brought to quench it.
 VWhen it lickt up whole houses , as the Oxe licks
 up grafs. VWhen massie timber was but as straw,
 and the very bricks burnt again like stubble.

Then might you have seen fourscore and odd
Churches, dedicated to God's Service, all in flames
 preaching *wrath* to such , as would not obey that
 VWord which had been preached in them.

It were infinite, and beside my purpose, as much
 as beyond my power, to expresse all the dreadfulness
 of that day. When the Sun it self seemed to be turned
 into blood , and the Moon was out-shone by
 the greater light of the Fire. When men had
 so long hazarded themselves to defend their houses,
 that they were glad to run away by the light of the
 fire that consumed them, to save their lives. VWhile
 some were disputing with themselves, what to save,
 and what to leave, the fire came and determined the
 debate, and consumed all. And to close up this sad
 Meditation,

VWhen the delicate Dame, that seldom used to
 touch the ground with her foot, was glad to beat it
 on the hoof, leading or rather dragging her tender
 Child in hand, jostled by every Porter without any
 E respect,

respect, and walking in as great a danger, as that from which she fled. And at night, instead of their large chambers, ceiled houses, warm beds, and rich hangings, were fain to take up in the open field; where they had no Canopy, but the Heavens; nor bed, but the Earth to rest upon.

Thus, thus, this famous City, which was elder than *Solomon's* Temple by an hundred years (if some calculate aright) and had been two thousand seven hundred and seventy years growing to its height, in four daies space, fell into that confused *Chaos*, wherein our eyes have seen it. Now in your cold blood you cannot but acknowledg that these were *real* reproofs, and may pass for *severe* ones too. That was the first Querie, the second follows; which is,

2. VWhether we have been amended by these *reproofs*? or, whether we have hardned our necks against them? I wish it may prove otherwise, but I fear the worst. Should a strict inquisition be made into our hearts and lives, what reformation would be found there? After all these several and sad dispensations, may not God say, *I would have healed you, and you would not be healed; I have done thus and thus unto you, brought one Judgment in the neck*

neck of another, but *ye have not returned to me, no not to this very day?*

VWhat *sins* are left? what *duties* better performed than before? tell me he that can, for I know not. Is not God's Name unhallowed by unimaginable *oaths, curses, and blasphemies*? Are not his Ordinances and Institutions *slighted* and *abused* still? Is not his Day openly *prophaned* still; and more than ever? Is *drunkenness, uncleanness, debauchery*, less in request than heretofore? Are we less *censorious, slandering, and backbiting* than we were? Is *covetousness, self-seeking, oppression, injustice*, less practiced than before these Judgments fell upon us? or, do not all these rather grow upon us? VWhat ground hath God gained upon us by these tedious executions? tell me he that can.

Truly (if a man may be bold to speak truth in this degenerate age) there seems to be but little reformation wrought. But, as those whom God complains of, the more we are *smitten*, the *worse we* Isai. i. *grow*: Like the Smith's Anvil, we are the harder for smiting; or like restive Jades, that go the worse for beating.

Of the prodigious *Atheism* which reigns among

too many ! who never think nor speak of God, but when they swear or curse ; never talk of Religion or the Scriptures, but to deride and jeer it ; who never think themselves Wits, till they have proved themselves downright Atheists ; who make these severe Judgments of God *matters* of their sport, but not *motives* to lead them to *repentance*.

In a word for all ; Are we more *serviceable* to God ? more *profitable* to men, more *faithful* in our callings, more *exact* in our duties, more *humble*, more *charitable*, more *conscionable* in our dealings, than before ? if not ; 'tis to be feared that we grow worse. If the furnace soften us not, as it doth gold, it will harden us, as it doth *clay*.

3. And if this be the case with us, what can we rationally expect, but what the Text threatens, *Destruction* ? We seem to draw towards it apace, and I cannot well see what will be the next degree of punishment to which God can advance, beneath Destruction.

We are already in *Ephraim's* case ; *strangers* had devoured his strength, and he saw it not ; grey hairs were here and there upon him, and he knew it not : But the *Pride* of Ephraim did testify to his face, and they do
not

not turn to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this. Is not this as true of us, as ever it was of Ephraim? Are not grey hairs upon us? is not our glory abated? our strength broken? are not the symptoms of a declining dying age upon us? Honour and reputation weakned abroad; trade and wealth lost at home. Poor sinful and feeble Nation! fainting under its own weight, creeping towards its own funeral; yet alas! we are not sensible of it, we lay it not to heart!

4. What then remains, but to apply our selves seriously to those waies and means, which only are left us, for the *reconciling* us to God, *supporting* of a tottering Nation, *establishing* of a languishing City, and *preventing* that destruction which is threatned in the Text? But what are they? Hear what God himself saith; *Return to me, and I will return to you. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.* Jer. 3. 1, & 22.

At what time I shall speak concerning a Nation or Kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it; if that Nation, against which I have pronounced, turn from their evil waies, I will repent me of the evil I thought to do against them. Jer. 18. 7, 8.

Jer. 42. 10.

If you will loath your selves, and all your doings which have not been good, and be guided by my Counsel; I will plant you, and not pluck you up, and I will repent me of the evil that I have done against you.

What then is to be done? Bend your ear to Discipline, and *harden* not your *necks* against Reproofs. Humble your selves under the mighty hand of God, and accept of the punishment of your sins. *Break off your sins by repentance, and your iniquity by acts of piety and charity.* Take unto your selves words, and say from the bottom of your heart, *Take away Iniquity, and receive us graciously. Now the axe is laid to the root of the tree, bring forth fruits meet for Repentance.*

O good Friends! if there be in your hearts any fear of God's Judgments, any sense of his Mercies, any pity to a languishing Kingdom, any kindness for an (almost) ruined City, *set, set quickly, set seriously* about this work. So may you happily see God's anger pacified, a tottering Nation supported, trade revived, and your City totally rebuilt, reinhabited, and flourish again. But if this be neglected, all other projects and contrivances will be so far from doing you good, that they
will

will advance your ruine. We may have *peace* with our neighbours, but how long that may last is uncertain. Or grant that a General peace, which is every good man's desire, be concluded in Christendom; yet who knows, but the first day of a General peace may be the last day of our tranquillity?

But admit, that we continue at peace with our Neighbours, and all the World; what will that advantage us, while God himself is our enemy? You may *recover trade*, but you will *lose the Jewel* of great price; *Riches* may be got, but *Heaven* will be *lost*. What though your City be rebuilt? (and, blessed be God, is like the *Phœnix* risen more glorious out of her own ashes) yet without *repentance* and *amendment of life*, the *stones* out of the walls will cry for justice, and the *beam* out of the timber will answer it. What though your City be built with *bricks*? so was *Babel*, and yet confounded; what though it were built of *hewen stone*? so was *Solomon's Temple*, and yet utterly destroyed.

Believe it, Sirs! There is no fence against an angry and incensed God, without *repentance*, and *amendment of life*. There was never yet any, either person

person or people, that *hardened themselves against him,*
and prospered. When the Mountains shall be melted,
 and the Rocks removed out of their place, there
 will be found an eternal truth in the words of the
 Text;

He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck,
shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without
remedy.

F I N I S.

